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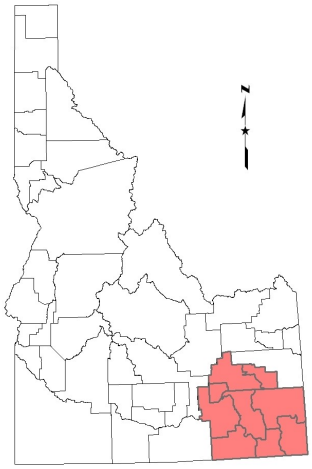
The Conservation Exchange

A Communication Link for Idaho's Conservation Districts

Southeast Idaho Conservation Districts



This Issue Featuring: Southeast Idaho

As spring quickly approaches, we invite you to find inspiration in all you see around you and gain some insight from the Southeastern Districts on their conservation practices and programs. This month includes a little history lesson, an annual tree sale, and how districts are utilizing funds and working in conjunction with agencies such as Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

On Tuesday, March 16, 2010 from 8-4:00 p.m., Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts will be hosting legislative displays at the Capitol Building in Boise. This year features several displays from districts all around the state. Show your support and stop by for a visit!

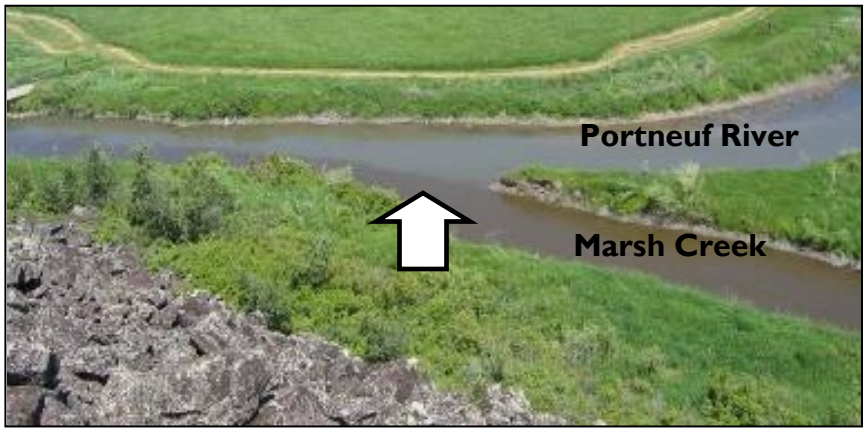
Portneuf Soil and Water Conservation District—Scott Henderson, Chairman

The Portneuf Soil and Water Conservation District (PSWCD) in Bannock County was established in 1940. The PSWCD has been very active over these years in conservation education and project implementation. Currently, the District is administering two DEQ §319 grants and a state WQPA grant to assist landowners in improving water quality in the Marsh Creek Watershed. Marsh Creek is the largest contributor of sediment to the Portneuf River, a 303(d)-listed water body. The Portneuf River TMDL calls for reductions of 66% for sediment and PSWCD proposed a phased approach for working toward TMDL reductions. This watershed project involves an extensive monitoring component in partnership with the Portneuf Watershed Partnership and Idaho State University. Currently, there are three continuous and ten discrete sites on Marsh Creek that are monitoring dissolved oxygen, temperature, specific conductivity, pH, turbidity, depth, and velocity.

As part of the Marsh Creek Watershed Project, there are 15 contracts with private landowners working towards improving water quality. BMPs include waste storage facilities, use exclusion and riparian exclusion fencing, streambank protection, tree/shrub establishment, off-stream watering facilities, pasture planting, nutrient management planning, and stream crossings. The District anticipates receiving an additional §319 grant this spring for the third phase of the Marsh Creek Watershed Project which will expand to include the Middle Portneuf River.

The support we receive from the cities, including Pocatello, Arimo, Downey, and Inkom, and from the Bannock County Commissioners has been instrumental in receiving grant funding. We also have had great support from our partner agencies, including NRCS, IASCD, ISCC, DEQ, ISDA, FSA, Portneuf Watershed Partnership, and the Downey-Swan Lake Highway District. Of course we would not be able to accomplish any of these projects without the outstanding landowners and producers in Bannock County!

Submitted by Janet Pacioretty
Janet.Pacioretty@id.nacdnet.net
208-237-4628 x 111



Project to decrease sediment entering the Portneuf River from Marsh Creek

South Bingham Soil Conservation District—Chris Wride, Chairman

The South Bingham Soil Conservation District celebrated their 56 year anniversary on February 2, 2010. Established on February 2, 1954 the original board members were Richard Savage Jr., Leonard S. Cornforth, John Heer, Blaine Sasser, and Lamar Whyte. Below are a few of the District's major projects over the years:

- The District, led by supervisor Allan Funk, was instrumental in the efforts to riprap the American Falls Reservoir in order to stabilize the shoreline
- The District has had a close and continued partnership with the NRCS Plant Material Center (PMC) over the years and works to improve and expand the facilities to meet the PMC's increased demand
- Chris Hoag, the Wetland Plant Ecologist at the PMC was instrumental in developing "The Stinger," a tool used in the planting of unrooted willow cuttings

South Bingham SCD Supervisors and Staff

- The District has been involved in improving wetland habitat in the Sterling area, Sportsman's Park, and on the Sherman Smith property
- The District has partnered with landowners to plant miles of shelter belts, tree rows, and windbreaks throughout South Bingham County (examples of these can be seen at Poulson's, Beck's, Munson's, and Shackleford's)
- The District has completed a demonstration project at the Chandler property on the Danielson Creek Watershed in Springfield to improve water quality in Danielson Creek and in the Springfield Reservoir
- The District partnered with the PMC to develop test plots on the desert for Rangeland grass research
- The District has worked with the local school district to introduce conservation to the students through the Envirothon, poster and speech contests, and educational field trips

Submitted by Marci Bradley, sbscd@dcdi.net or 208-397-4917

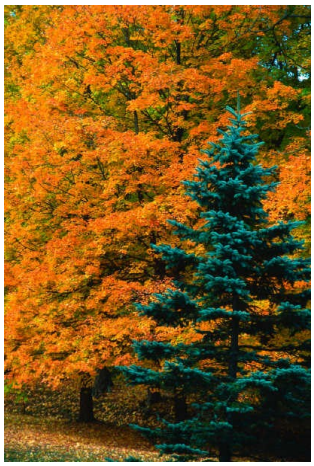
Central Bingham Conservation District—Christopher Dalley, Chairman

Central Bingham's Annual Tree Sale is underway again. We are taking orders for Burlap & Ball Spruce Trees. The price for a Blue or Green Spruce, 30-36", is $37. there is a large variety of bare root trees and shrubs available. We are also taking orders for potted trees and mulching fabric.

Description, pictures, and an order form are available on our website, www.cbtreesale.com, and at the office, 725 Jensen Grove Dr, Suite 3, Blackfoot, or call 208 -785-6505 ext. 102 with any questions.

Orders will be taken until April 20, 2010 with delivery scheduled for April 30, 2010 at the Eastern Idaho State Fairgrounds from 8-6:00 p.m. on Friday and 8-12:00 p.m. on Saturday, May 1st.

Submitted by Kathy Merrill
kathym@ida.net or 208-785-6505 x 102



Benefits of Planting Windbreaks

Home Energy Conservation: Windbreaks can decrease winter heating costs 10-40% and reduce cold air filtration into your home by 75%

Reduced soil erosion: A windbreak will decrease wind speed close to the ground up to 50%, lessening the wind's ability to blow away your topsoil

Snow drift control: A properly placed windbreak will keep snow from drifting across your driveway, farm lane, or access roads

Wildlife habitat: Wildlife will use windbreaks for cover, food, and reproduction. Studies show that 50-80 birds nest per mile of windbreak

Increased home value: Healthy trees around your home add value to your property

Bear River Project: Innovative Water Conservation Measures

A Joint Project between Bear Lake and Franklin Soil and Water Conservation Districts

Increasing demands from industry, recreational interests, rural to urban conversion, and agriculture are creating potential water crises and placing pressures on water, a very important and limited natural resource. The greater the demand, the greater the need for water users to use and share available water wisely. The action plan for the Bear River: Innovative Water Conservation Measures Recovery Act 2009 water conservation project exemplifies Locally Led Conservation. It is based on the principle that community stakeholders are best suited to deal with natural resources problems.

Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) Water District 11 has water delivery authority for the Bear River as it enters Idaho in Bear Lake County until it exits Idaho in Franklin County. An order has been given to the Bear River water right holders to provide an acceptable water measurement device and funds were applied for under the Recovery Act 2009 program administered by the Bureau of Reclamation. Due to the requirement of the Request For Proposal (RFP), Water District 11 needed assistance and pipeline projects from Bear Lake and Franklin SWCD. A unique partnership was formed: District 11 is the grant holder, Bear Lake SWCD is the Central Project Administrator, and Franklin SWCD is the Lower Project Administrator.

This approach to improving water efficiencies consists of two parts. Part One installs water measurement devices and real time automated water diversion reporting systems for 19 of the 53 diversion points along the Bear River Basin to provide accurate and timely water diversion data and controls. Part Two converts 39 miles of open ditch to pipelines, as well as lining 450 feet of canal with an innovative yet proven method of using polyuera lining. When the water is delivered to 11,080 acres of agricultural land, the economic and environmental benefits of the project will be realized in their entirety.

Table 1: Summarized Savings:

	Part 1-measuring devices	Part 2-canal lining	Total project
Current Average annual water supplied	181,000 AFA	123,881 AFA	304,881 AFA
Current Water Marketed	0.00 AFA	0 AFA	0 AFA
Estimated water saved	0.00 AFA	40,033 AFA	40,033 AFA
Estimated water better managed	48,000 AFA	123,881 AFA	171,881 AFA
Estimated water marketed	0.00 AFA	1,000 to 1,200 AFA	1,200 AFA

AFA=Acre Feet annually

Water savings resulting from this proposed project will have three main purposes and uses depending on annual water conditions: 1) The water will be used to meet crop demands and satisfy water rights; 2) Using collaborative approach, excess water will be transferred to other irrigation users in the Bear River watershed through shared facilities; and 3) Water saved by Preston-Whitney Irrigation will be transferred to other Franklin County users via an Idaho Water Bank Pooling Agreement.

There are three primary tasks associated with this project:

Task A—Creates the Idaho Water Bank to allow water bank pooling that Preston-Whitney Irrigation can sell at a later date without damage to their future water rights.

Task B—Canal lining will remove leaks and seepage currently causing water shortages, yield losses, and inefficient farm-management.

Task C—Measuring devices will allow water users the opportunity to cooperatively use the resources conservatively.

The proposed installation of a real-time monitoring system in the Bear River Basin will be integrated into the www.bearriverbasin.org website, creating a publicly-accessible, comprehensive, three-state, basin-wide vision to optimize efficiency of the basin water supply. In addition to water measurement devices, it will take advantage of radio telemetry technology to remotely monitor irrigation diversions.

Due to the complexity of intermingling, joint projects are inherently over-run with management problems and place the desires of one company against another. This is where the Franklin SWCD and Bear Lake SWCD expertise is vital to the partnership. The mediation role and unbiased approach of the Conservation District is important for the success of the project.

For more information:

Lyla Dettmer, Franklin SWCD 208-852-0884 or JoAnn Taylor, Bear Lake SWCD 208-847-5327

Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District—Steve Chatterton, Chairman

The Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District, in cooperation Rocky Mountain Power's Environmental Coordinating Committee (ECC), Idaho Department of Agriculture, and Idaho Soil Conservation Commission, has completed a grant-funded project. The grant was given by the Environmental Protection Agency through the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality. It is titled the Bear River Animal Feeding Operation (AFO) and included the work of five different landowners and local contractors completing six different projects. The goal was to minimize the impact of animal feeding operations on the riparian areas to improve water quality and wildlife habitat. In this project there were many different BMP's installed such as Spring Developments, Stock water Pipelines, Watering Facilities, Berms, Exclusion Fence, Corral Fence, and a Waste Facility Cover.

The landowners and local contractors worked very hard to complete this project. The riparian areas and adjacent land will benefit greatly from the conservation improvements. The improvement to the water quality will create better habitat for the Bonneville Cutthroat Trout which is a sensitive species under the endangered species program.

The project used $100,200 of §319 funds, $46,000 of ECC non-federal grant funds, and approximately $55,000 of landowner contributions to get the BMP's on the ground. This gave the project a total of about $217,000 that all benefited businesses in Franklin County.

In conjunction with this project we have utilized another facet of our District. In the Spring the water monitoring has been done by students from the Franklin County High School. This monitoring is but one day of the education that we provide in a three week, 75-hour Ecology course that allows the students eleven days out in the field doing hands-on conservation practices and three days in a classroom setting.

This annual Ecology course started when we partnered with Franklin County High in 2005. They approached us with the idea that conservation was an interesting subject and thought we could really work together. Since it really worked into our public outreach and education goals in our annual plan, we ran with it. Over the last few years, we have cultivated and/or utilized every outside organization with a similar mission to assist us. Each day has a different natural resource focus, i.e., soil, water, or air quality. This project has also helped with our partnership with NRCS by allowing these students to volunteer for Earth Team hours. This program has been well accepted by the school district educators and produces a win-win situation for all of us. It is our hope to continue using this educational process in conjunction with our future §319 monitoring needs.

For more information:
Scott Blake, Conservation Technician
scott.blake@earthlink.net or 208-852-0562 x 118
Chris Hatch, Education Specialist
chris.hatch@id.nacdnet.net or 208-852-0562 x 112

Before and After—Bear River AFO

Costs associated with this publication are available from the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission in accordance with Section 60-202, Idaho Code